

- 197 A Tibetan Dictionary, by the last author, in the Roman character, has also, I believe, been published.

USE OF PERSIAN.

- 198 With all these different languages current in the territories it
212 can be understood that in carrying on the Government some difficulties occur through their variety. It is not easy to say whether these difficulties have been increased or lessened by the use for official documents of yet another tongue, one not spoken in any part of those territories either by the commonalty or as the Court language. The official written language is Persian.* Orders given by the Maharaja are written in Persian—character and language. In the British province of the Panjāb the Persian character is employed for writing the Hindostāni language, but here in Jummo none of the vernaculars are written in that character, the Persian language itself is employed. Under the Maharaja the Government accounts are kept in Persian, and in almost every case that language is the medium of official communication, though it is true that the Dogri, as will be shown below, is in some cases used.

Though Persian is so commonly written that all who would aspire to an office of any estimation must become familiar with it, yet it is very seldom spoken in Jummo, only, indeed, when some trader or other traveller from Kābul or from Yārkaṇd comes, unacquainted with our familiar dialects, and makes himself understood with Persian, which is the French of Asia.

This use of Persian for Government writings is to be traced back to the Court of the Delhi Emperors. There Persian had always been the polite, and it remained to the last the official, language; for long had it been the practice of those classes of men who were likely to have a hand in the civil affairs of Government early to acquire Persian, and so, on the formation of Ranjit Singh's kingdom in the Panjāb, it naturally became the official written language of his Court, although Ranjit Singh himself was unacquainted with it. Persian still had that position when the British came into the

* Persian is called in India by the names Fārsī and Irānī.

Panjāb, and it held its place for some little time after, until the system was changed to that in use in the North-west Provinces, where the Persian alphabet is used for the Hindostāni dialect—a plan that has evident advantages (since Hindostāni is becoming familiarly spoken by many of the Panjāb people), advantages which would be increased were the writers of Hindostāni to make use of a less elaborate idiom and less recondite words. The adoption of Persian in the Jummoo Court came about from similar causes; but I cannot say whether its use dates from an earlier period or from the time of the connection of the country with Ranjīt Singh's Court. 198 212

WRITTEN CHARACTERS.

Besides the Persian character, which in these territories is hardly ever applied to any but the Persian language, there are three written characters used for the languages here spoken. These are Dogri, Kashmīri, and Tibetan. They are all derived from the Devanāgarī or Shāstri, the character in which Sanskrit is written. 212

In its old form the Dogri alphabet was imperfect and not easy to read either accurately or quickly. For this reason, a few years ago, the Maharaja caused to be invented a modification of it; by this it was brought nearer to Devanāgarī, so near that the system is quite one with that, though the forms are somewhat different. It may be questioned whether it would not have been better to adopt the Devanāgarī alphabet itself, which is known to certain classes all over India; the difference already made is so great as to keep those who have learnt but one of the two Dogri alphabets from being able to read in the other. However, the subject of what is the best alphabet to make general is a wide one, and must be considered in connection with the question of what dialect is to prevail and what languages are to be generally taught.* The

* With a mixed population of Hindūs and Muhammadans, such as occurs in the Maharaja's country no less than in the British, it is difficult to pitch upon an alphabet likely to be willingly adopted by people of both religions. All those alphabets which are founded on Devanāgarī are disliked by the Muhammadans as being the vehicle by which Hindū idolatry is taught. Hindūs often fear to have their sons taught [563]